

Fiscal Highlights

Public Lands Office New Attorney Positions - Brian Wikle

In the 2016 General Session the Public Lands Policy Coordinating Office (PLPCO) received funding for three new attorney positions along with necessary staff support. The office has filled two of the attorney positions and is in the process of assessing the needs for support positions. The office faced two primary challenges in attracting quality attorneys with requisite expertise: (1) the appropriations were one-time and potential hires recognized the inherent instability that such funding creates; and (2) two positions were funded for FY 2016 supplemental which compounded the issue of one-time funding because PLPCO must receive nonlapsing authority to carry over any of the new funding to FY 2017. Following is a summary of the appropriations, hiring, and expenditures to date.

Rural Public Lands Attorney and Assistant -- \$300,000 General Fund, one-time, FY 2016 supplemental (see [S.B. 3](#), Item 121)

Shea Owens was hired as an attorney effective July 11, 2016. Approximately \$40,000 of the appropriation has been spent, and PLPCO will request nonlapsing authority for any funding that remains at the close of FY 2016. Although Shea is based in Panguitch, he participates in weekly staff meetings via conference call and he meets with PLPCO staff at least monthly in the Salt Lake City office. Shea meets with county officials in southern Utah on an almost daily basis, and they have praised his work. Due to the extensive travel required, PLPCO is currently renting a vehicle for Shea's use from DNR, and the office will request purchase of a vehicle for FY 2018. Shea is assessing the needs for the assistant position, and PLPCO intends to hire an assistant before the end of the calendar year.

Public Lands Attorney -- \$180,000 General Fund, one-time, FY 2016 supplemental (see [S.B. 3](#), Item 121)
The position has not been filled.

Endangered Species Attorney and Staff -- \$206,000 Sovereign Lands Management Account, one-time, FY 2017 (see [H.B. 2](#), Item 122)

Braden Shepperd was hired as an attorney effective May 2, 2016. Approximately \$51,000 of the appropriation has been spent, and PLPCO will request nonlapsing authority for any funding that remains at the close of FY 2017. Braden gained experience with litigation and administrative procedures associated with the Endangered Species Act while working in Nebraska. In addition to focusing on endangered species issues associated with sage grouse, Mexican wolves, and rare plants, Braden has also assisted PLPCO with issues related to wild burros and wild horses in southern Utah.